

LOOMIS & BASSETT.

[To accompany bill H. R. No. 422.]

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JANUARY 18, 1838.

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Mr. INGHAM, from the Committee on Naval Affairs, made the following

REPORT :

*The Committee on Naval Affairs, to whom was referred the memorial of Jarius Loomis, sailingmaster, commanding the United States gun-vessel No. 149, and James Bassett, sailingmaster of gun-vessel No. 154, on behalf of themselves and their respective crews, respectfully report :*

That they have considered the same, and the documents therein referred to, and adopt, as their report, the report made to the House by the Committee on Naval Affairs on the 24th March, 1818, to which the committee ask leave to refer, and make it a part of this report. And the committee having estimated the value of the property thus captured and deposited in the navy yard at New Orleans, and having found it to amount to ten thousand nine hundred and thirty dollars, accordingly report a bill for one-half of said sum.

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MARCH 24, 1818.

*The Committee on Naval Affairs, to whom was referred the memorial of Jarius Loomis, sailingmaster, commanding the United States gun-vessel No. 149, and James Bassett, sailingmaster, commanding gun-vessel No. 154, on behalf of themselves and their respective crews, report :*

The memorialists state that, in the month of June, 1816, they received orders from Commodore Patterson, commanding on the New Orleans station, requiring them to convey certain transports, laden with ordnance, provisions, &c., up the rivers Appalachieola and Chattahoochie, to a post established by Lieutenant Colonel Clinch, of the United States army ; that these orders were founded on a letter of request from Major General Gaines, to Commodore Patterson, stating the difficulty of supplying the military post on the Appalachieola by land, and his determination to

do it by water, with the assistance of the Commodore. In the letter of General Gaines, among the dangers to be apprehended in ascending the river, a negro fort is mentioned and described, situated on the left bank of the river, and the General expresses his determination to destroy it in case it should attempt any opposition to his purpose; and that the memorialists were ordered to co-operate with the land forces. In pursuance of their orders, aforesaid, the memorialists received in charge two vessels laden with provisions and stores, took them under convoy, and arrived off the river Appalachicola on the 10th July, 1816, where they received despatches from Colonel Clinch, stating his intention to send a party of men to assist in conveying the transports up the river. On the 15th of said month, whilst the memorialists were waiting the arrival of said men, they discovered a boat pulling out of the river, and despatched one of their own boats to her, to ascertain the probability of being able to pass the negro fort in the vicinity; on approaching the boat aforesaid, a volley of musketry was discharged, and she immediately pulled for the shore. On the 17th of the said month, the memorialists depatched a boat, properly armed, up the river to look for fresh water, under charge of a midshipman and four men; the boat reached the shore near the mouth of the river, was fired on and captured by a party of negroes and Indians in ambuscade, the midshipman and two men killed, one taken prisoner, and the fourth escaped; the prisoner was afterwards burnt by the Indians. On the 25th of the month, in consequence of information from Colonel Clinch that he was approaching and near the negro fort, the memorialists began to ascend the river, and arrived with their convoy at a point about four miles below the negro fort, where they ascertained that Colonel Clinch had attempted to pass the fort, and had been fired on whenever he came within reach of their guns. It was, however, determined to attempt to force a passage, and after waiting an ineffectual endeavor to erect a battery on shore to annoy the fort, the memorialists, on the 27th of the month, began to warp their vessels up the river. On reaching a station within a mile and a half of the fort, the negroes commenced a fire on the gun-vessels, which was instantly returned, and a heavy cannonade took place on both sides for fifteen minutes, when a hot shot from one of the gun-vessels struck the magazine belonging to the fort, and blew it up. The fort was fought under the English union jack and bloody flag. By the explosion, the fort was destroyed, and near 270 negroes and Indians killed, the whole amounting to about three hundred. A number of articles, consisting chiefly of military stores, fell into the hands of the captors, part of which were taken possession of by Colonel Clinch for the use of the troops, part given to the friendly Indians, and the remainder were delivered by the memorialists to the United States officers at New Orleans, which, having been appraised by persons appointed for that purpose, were estimated at a sum between ten and twelve thousand dollars. The memorialists pray that Congress would bestow on them such part of the estimated value of said articles as they shall think their conduct merited.

The committee, having considered the foregoing statement, which, from the documents obtained from the Navy Department, appears to be substantially correct, think, as this property was acquired by the valor and hazards of the memorialists, (and no person appearing to claim it,)

it would be proper to bestow a part of the value on them. They recommend that the Secretary of the Navy be authorized to distribute among the officers and crews of the gun-vessels one-half the estimated value of the articles delivered at New Orleans; for which purpose they report a bill.

